

Cold thoughts about heating New Hampshire's homes this winter

With December comes cold weather. The winter heating season is upon us and after the spikes in energy cost caused by the devastation of the Gulf Coast region, many are anxious where the energy prices will go.

The Northeast is particularly vulnerable to external influences on heating fuel prices because the area, until recently, did not have access to alternative types of heating fuels or natural gas. While half of New Hampshire's electricity generation is from nuclear power, most of the remaining plants depend on importing fossil fuels for the power generation process.

Structure demographics

The census housing information from 2000 showed that New Hampshire was home to about ten percent of all the housing units in New England. Housing units, as defined by the Census Bureau, refers to structures in which people live. Over half of the housing units in the state had between four and six rooms. And although almost a quarter of the housing units in New Hampshire were built prior to 1939, the median year of when the structure was built is newer in New Hampshire than New England as a whole, 1971 versus 1960. Some of these older units may have had energy conservation/efficiency updates, how-

ever they still have heating challenges not found in newer structures.

Almost three of every five housing units in the state use fuel oil or kerosene as their primary source for heat. Another two of every seven units use utility gas or bottled, tank or LP gas. Barely one of twenty have wood, coal or other sources as their primary heat.

Although New Hampshire has a tenth of New England's housing structures, its shares of the types of primary heating sources used were not proportionate to the region. New Hampshire accounted for only about seven percent of the utility gas and bottled, tank and LP gas usage in New England. The state's usage of fuel oil was proportionate to the number of households at 10.4 percent. And the use of wood, coal and other sources was 16.8 percent of the region's total. So, in comparison, New Hampshire uses relatively less gas and more wood and coal than the region as a whole.

Recently many concerns have been voiced about what burdens New Hampshire residents, and residents of the entire Northeast face to heat their homes this upcoming winter. To put this in perspective, a survey conducted by the US Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration provides household energy consumption and expenditure information according to census divisions. Using this information it is possible to compare New England heating sources and expenditures with those of the nation.

Fuel oil

As of 2001, the point of the survey, New England accounted for 5.4 million of the nation's 107 million households,

	New England Division		New Hampshire	
	Number	Percent of total	Number	Percent of total
Total:	5,941,108	100.0%	547,024	100.0%
Built in 1999 to March 2000	73,105	1.2%	10,612	1.9%
Built in 1995 to 1998	227,635	3.8%	28,419	5.2%
Built in 1990 to 1994	283,394	4.8%	34,207	6.3%
Built in 1980 to 1989	799,614	13.5%	117,865	21.5%
Built in 1970 to 1979	849,771	14.3%	95,757	17.5%
Built in 1960 to 1969	731,341	12.3%	57,023	10.4%
Built in 1950 to 1959	754,603	12.7%	46,020	8.4%
Built in 1940 to 1949	470,192	7.9%	27,623	5.0%
Built in 1939 or earlier	1,751,453	29.5%	129,498	23.7%

Source: US Census

barely five percent of total households. Nationally, it is estimated that just over eight percent of total households used fuel oil as a source of heat (not restricted to the primary heat source). Of those, 31 percent of the national usage was in New England. There were \$6.31 billion spent nationally on fuel oil and \$2.46 billion of that was spent in New England.

Among those that stated they used fuel oil, the total expenditures for fuel oil in New England were significantly higher than those of the nation, \$903 compared to \$737 per household respectively. [The 2001 price per gallon was \$1.25 in New England and \$1.24 for the nation.] The extended length of the winter heating season and extreme cold tempera-

tures in New England influence the cost per household.

The use of fuel oil as a primary source of heat is prevalent in New England because of the lack of other fuel sources. Other regions that experience cold winter temperatures have more access to natural gas through distribution lines for sources such as natural gas which are just recently becoming available in New England. Because of the region's dependence on fuel oil, and recent high prices, many people will be more likely to use alternative heating from backup sources such as wood pellets and wood.

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	Number of Households (millions)	
	United States	New England
Total households	107.0	5.4
Number of households, fuels used (more than one may apply)		
Electricity*	107.0	5.4
Natural Gas	66.9	2.3
Fuel Oil	8.7	2.7
Kerosene	2.9	0.0
LPG	9.4	0.7
Wood	14.5	0.9

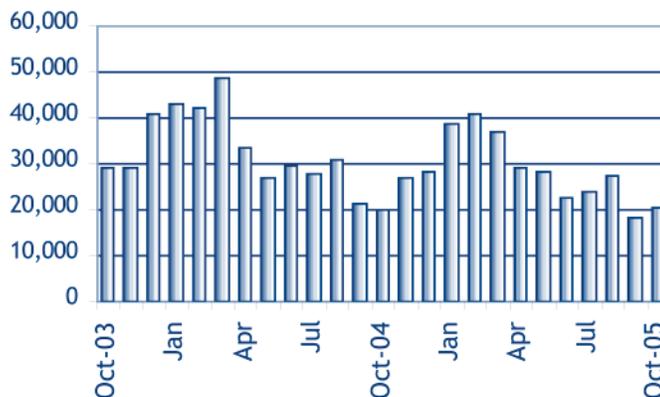
*The RECS cannot be used to accurately estimate the number of households that do not use electricity

Unemployment Compensation Claims Activity

Total Regular Unemployment Compensation Programs:	Change from Previous						
				Month		Year	
	Oct-05	Sep-05	Oct-04	Net	Percent	Net	Percent
Initial Claims	3,447	2,781	3,490	666	23.9%	-43	-1.2%
Continued Weeks	20,318	18,438	20,138	1,880	10.2%	180	0.9%

Unemployment Compensation Fund

Unemployment compensation fund balance at the end of October	\$265,436,958.51
Average payment for a week of total unemployment:	\$264.41
Net benefits paid:	\$4,830,881.35
Net contributions received during the month:	\$4,876,222.43
Interest Received:	\$0.00
Reed Act Distribution:	\$0.00
Reed Act Withdrawal for Administrative Costs:	\$0.00



Claims Activity

Trust Fund

Continued Weeks Claimed

Oct 2003 - Oct 2005
Continued weeks claimed in New Hampshire increased from September to October. This is only the seventh time in the last 29 years that the continued weeks claimed count increased between these two months.

			Change from Previous	
Oct-05	Sep-05	Oct-04	Month	Year
199.2	198.8	190.9	0.2%	4.3%

United States
All Urban Areas (CPI-U)
(1982-1984=100)

Consumer Price Index